

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A method for providing a cascade electronic mail distribution process comprising:
- creating an electronic mail message having a flag to identify the electronic mail message as a cascade-type electronic mail message; and
- forwarding a received cascade-type electronic mail message to recipients in a recipients list.
2. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
- creating an electronic mail message having a flag to identify the electronic mail message as a cascade forward-type electronic mail message; and
- automatically forwarding a received cascade forward-type electronic mail message to recipients in a forwarded mail log.
3. A method for providing a cascade electronic mail distribution process comprising:
- creating a first electronic mail message, where the first electronic mail message is a cascade-type message;
- distributing the first electronic mail message to at least one first recipient;
- forwarding the first electronic mail message from the at least one first recipient to at least one second recipient; and
- creating a forwarded mail log that identifies the first electronic mail message and the recipients of the first electronic mail message.
4. The method of claim 3 further comprising:
- identifying the at least one second recipient in a recipient table, where the at least one second recipient is cascade enabled.
5. The method of claim 3 further comprising:
- creating a second electronic mail message that is required to be received by all the recipients of the first electronic mail message, where the second

1 electronic mail message is a cascade forward type message;  
2 distributing the second electronic mail message to the at least one first  
3 recipient;  
4 accessing the forwarded mail log to identify the at least one second  
5 recipient that received the first electronic mail message;  
6 automatically forwarding the second electronic mail message to the  
7 identified at least one second recipient.

- 8  
9 6. The method of claim 4 wherein said accessing step further comprises:  
10 comparing a list of recipients of the second electronic mail message to  
11 said identified at least one second recipient; and  
12 identifying the at least one second recipient that is not in the list of  
13 recipients.

- 14  
15 7. The method of claim 3 further comprising:  
16 identifying if a user accepts cascade-type electronic mail and, if not,  
17 sending an electronic message to the sender of a cascade-type electronic mail  
18 message that identifies the user as not accepting cascade-type electronic mail.

- 19  
20 8. Apparatus for providing cascade electronic mail distribution comprising:  
21 a first terminal for sending a cascade-type electronic mail message  
22 through a network;  
23 a second terminal for receiving from the first terminal via the network  
24 the cascade-type electronic mail message, updating a forwarded log with an  
25 identification of a third terminal, and forwarding the cascade-type electronic  
26 mail message to the third terminal.

- 27  
28 9 The apparatus of claim 8 wherein the forwarded cascade-type electronic mail  
29 message comprises an original message from said first terminal and additional  
30 message information from said second terminal.

- 31  
32 10. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein the cascade-type electronic mail message

comprises:

a message identification;

a recipients field;

a message type field that identifies a cascade feature of the electronic mail message; and

a message field.

11. The apparatus of claim 10 wherein the message identification comprises a user name and a time-stamp.

12. The apparatus of claim 10 wherein the message type field is a cascade enable field.

13. The apparatus of claim 10 wherein the message type field is a cascade-forward enable field.

14. The apparatus of claim 10 further comprises a previous message field.

15. Apparatus for processing electronic mail comprising:

a first portion of an electronic mail processor for creating an electronic mail message having a flag to identify the electronic mail message as a cascade-type electronic mail message; and

a second portion of the electronic mail processor for forwarding received cascade-type electronic mail message to recipients in a recipients list.

16. The apparatus of claim 15 further comprising:

a third portion of the electronic mail processor for creating an electronic mail message having a flag to identify the electronic mail message as a cascade forward-type electronic mail message; and

a fourth portion of the electronic mail processor for automatically forwarding received cascade forward-type electronic mail message to recipients in a forwarded mail log.

- 1 17. The apparatus of claim 16 wherein the cascade forward-type electronic mail  
2 message comprises a retraction of a previously sent electronic mail message.  
3
- 4 18. A computer readable medium comprising software that, when executed by a  
5 general purpose computer, causes said general purpose computer to perform a  
6 method comprising:  
7 creating an electronic mail message having a flag to identify the  
8 electronic mail message as a cascade-type electronic mail message; and  
9 forwarding received cascade-type electronic mail message to recipients  
10 in a recipients list.  
11
- 12 19. The method of claim 18 further comprising:  
13 creating an electronic mail message having a flag to identify the  
14 electronic mail message as a cascade forward-type electronic mail message; and  
15 automatically forwarding received cascade forward-type electronic mail  
16 message to recipients in a forwarded mail log.  
17
- 18 20. A computer readable medium comprising a data structure of an electronic mail  
19 message comprising:  
20 a message identification;  
21 a recipients field;  
22 a message type field that identifies a cascade feature of the electronic  
23 mail message; and  
24 a message field.  
25
- 26 21. The data structure of claim 20 wherein the message identification comprises a  
27 user name and a time-stamp.  
28
- 29 22. The data structure of claim 20 wherein the message type field is a cascade  
30 enable field.  
31
- 32 23. The data structure of claim 20 wherein the message type field is a cascade-

1 forward enable field.

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3 24. The data structure of claim 20 further comprises a previous message field.

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